



Workshop on

South-East Asian *agri benchmark* Rice Network

March 18th -22nd, 2013
at Rama Gardens Hotel, Bangkok

I. Background

Rice is one of the most important crops in Southeast Asia. Not only is rice a staple food for a large portion of the population but also rice farming is a livelihood and a main source of income for the majority of rural households. Recently ASEAN countries have been moving towards a free trade agreement regarding goods, capital and service in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). This major change in economic framework conditions will lead to an increased trade and competition among crops and between cropping systems. This in turn implies inevitably opportunities and threat to farmers, particularly small-scale farmers to adjust and fine tune their production and marketing patterns in order to cope with the dynamics of regional economy. Within the ASEAN Countries Thailand and Vietnam already today play a major role in global rice markets - they control close to half of the global rice trade. Furthermore, it is expected that rice production in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar may increase rapidly in coming years thanks to their abundant agricultural land and water resources. Over the next decades South-East Asia has the potential to strongly expand its position as the globally leading rice export region.

On the other hand there is indication that rice production in the region is faced with sometimes poor farm management and presumably high production cost – however reliable and comparable data is lacking so far. In addition, there are new challenges for the regional rice production such as an increasing competition for labor force with industry; small farms and field plots with little room to realize economies of scale and - at least in some parts of the region - stagnating rice yields. Furthermore, with an increase in trade, the quality of outputs as well as farmers ability to meet market requirements are becoming major issues.

Lastly, with major price increases in global commodities markets and stronger links between different agricultural commodity markets the question arises whether rice is still a competitive crop at the farm level and what can be done to improve economics of rice production and marketing.

In order to systematically analyze challenges and to explore options to improve economics of rice production it is envisaged to establish a regional network of rice production economists which will be part of the global *agri benchmark* Cash Crop network. The rational and the overall aims for the network are explained in greater detail in annex 1.

The proposed workshop is meant to serve as a starting point for a jointly defined *agri benchmark* network on rice in South-East Asia. Hereafter, the design, the main goals and envisaged outcomes for the workshop are laid out.

II. Objectives for the workshop

1. Generate a joint understanding of the current status and recent developments of rice production and markets in participating South-East Asian countries.
2. Identify major challenges for rice production in South-East Asian countries.
3. Define joint principles and goals, including a detailed plan for establishing a regional network of agricultural economists and respective institutions for monitoring and analyzing farm economics as well as rice and other agricultural commodity markets.
4. Agree on some key internal structures for the envisaged rice network such as a regional coordination management.
5. Come up with a master plan for exploring funding opportunities.

III. Output of the workshop

1. Report on the status of rice production in South-East Asian and major challenges on the farm level as well as in marketing and inputs that require further research.
2. A joint paper on principles regarding the envisaged network.
3. A timetable for the establishment of typical farms in the region and a subsequent meeting to present first results.

IV. Venue

Orchid Room (G Floor), Rama Gardens Hotel
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V. Organizing Units

Knowledge Network Institute of Thailand (KNIT)
Thailand research Fund (TRF) and
agri benchmark Cash Crop Network, Institute of Farm Economics, Germany

VI. Workshop Secretary

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